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SCIENCE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1921

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE¹

THE British Association for the Advancement of Science owes its origin, and, in great measure, its specific aims and functions, to the public spirit and zeal for the interests of science of Scotsmen. Its virtual founder was Sir David Brewster; its scope and character were defined by Principal Forbes. In constitution it differed from the migratory scientific associations existing on the Continent, which mainly served to promote the social intercourse of their members by annual gatherings, in that it was to be a permanent organization, with a settled establishment and headquarters, which should have not merely its yearly reunions, but which, "by methods and by influence peculiarly its own, should continue to operate during the intervals of these public assemblies, and should aspire to give an impulse to every part of the scientific system; to mature scientific enterprise; and to direct the labors requisite for discovery."

Although, for reasons of policy, it was decided that its first meeting of September 27, 1831, should be held at York, as the most central city for the three kingdoms, and its second and third meetings at the ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge respectively, it was inevitable that the association should seize the earliest opportunity to visit the metropolis of Scotland where, as an historical fact, it may be said to have had its origin.

The meeting in this city of September 8, 1834, was noteworthy for many reasons. It afforded the first direct proof that the association was fulfilling its purpose. This was shown by the popular appreciation which attended its activities, by the range and charac-

¹ Read at the Edinburgh meeting, September 7, 1921.